

## 2015 State of the City Address

Mayor Ted Eyre

Good Evening, Murray City Council Members, residents, visitors and City staff. I am grateful for the opportunity to address you tonight and provide my thoughts on the State of our City. 2014 was one of the most rewarding and memorable years of my life. This occasion, affords me the time for reflection on all the experiences I have learned from and enjoyed.

When you are a resident of a city such as ours, you come to appreciate many of the services you see each day, and acknowledge those that may be less obvious. In Murray we have wonderful parks, improving streets, clean water, consistent power and evidence of public safety that assures us that our homes and families are protected. Sometimes, because we are so accustomed to these services, there is an assumption that they will always be available and accessible. However, this year, while serving as Mayor, I have learned what it takes to keep our lives comfortable and the unseen effort that is required by so many. I would like to share with you some 'little known facts of great importance' that will help us to better appreciate this city where we live, work and raise our families.

As a well-established and nearly built-out city, we may not always notice a lot of new development, but it is truly surprising to learn of all that is happening in various locations around our town. Thanks to the efforts of so many, we are now in a great position for redevelopment in several areas. Our Downtown, between 4800 South and 5300 South, is poised for big changes. Planning has been done this year by a major developer in creating a concept for several exciting projects, and we are on the cusp of having great activity in the center of the City. I applaud the foresight of our City Council, Department Heads and Senior Staff in taking the steps to secure some of the property that have made these options available to us and will result in a rejuvenated Downtown area. We have already seen evidence of this with the completion of the Home2Suites on State and Vine. This can act as a catalyst for big changes that are coming to this area. There are also 60 new downtown-living units, in the Center Court project, that will be available for residents in the next few weeks.

As you know, two additional hotels opened their doors this year as well. The Marriot Residence Inn has 135 guest rooms and the Holiday Inn on Commerce Drive has 114. Much of this is the result of the nationally acclaimed medical facility, the Intermountain Medical Center that has had such a positive impact on our economic development and will influence the future of Murray for decades to come.

The Fireclay Transit Oriented Development continues to transition as a valuable, vibrant new area with apartments and townhomes in high demand. Because of our central location in the valley, and with easy access to alternate transportation, this innovative concept combines to

attract new residents and allows many of those who grew up in Murray the opportunity to remain here and establish their individual roots in a city they love.

I now have even a greater appreciation for a wonderful Fashion Place Mall that is never satisfied with its current success, but is always growing and improving. The new Dillard's store, with over 200,000 square feet, is anticipated to open by late summer. The Container Store opened last fall as the first in Utah and has caused quite a stir of excitement. Another anchor store will be announced soon to replace the current Dillard's site along with the addition of other small retail outlets. Directly to the north of the mall is the new University of Utah Mid-Valley Medical Center incorporating the Moran Eye Clinic and the University Dermatology Center. They anticipate more than 70,000 patients a year will use this new facility.

It has been encouraging to see many new businesses continue to come into our City at a steadily increasing pace. In 2014, we had over 500 new business licenses issued. Our Community Development Division is kept very busy processing and approving these requests.

We are committed to build a new City Hall. Work is currently being done by an architectural firm to evaluate two sites for consideration. One is in our Downtown area on the west side of State Street and the other is on our current City Hall site. This study will also help to determine the amount of square footage needed and the most strategic location for each department. The plans include bringing our Justice Court into the City Hall complex along with our Building, Planning and Business Licensing Divisions. We are fortunate our city leaders and finance director have insured that funding for this building has been saved over the course of the last decade. Our desire is to have this new building become a landmark for the City and provide a sense of pride for our residents

As much as we concentrated on economic development, we have tried to put an equal emphasis on the preservation of our wonderful neighborhoods. We have a great relationship with NeighborWorks who expanded their services in Murray last year. They purchased and rehabilitated four homes for resale and have begun work on five additional homes. These refurbished properties have a positive effect on the entire neighborhood, as adjacent homes become encouraged to improve their surroundings as well. Their scope for improving our housing stock now includes low-income home improvement loans, and grants for specific green and healthy projects.

Our GIS Division specializes in creating maps of all kinds. They made a "Murray City Tour Map" that is available on our website and shares many ideas of interesting, close places to visit. They also mapped more than 7,000 water service laterals to help improve our water distribution system.

Soon, our City employees will be learning to operate a completely new software system. This is a major undertaking and will take several years to get all the facets of it operational, but we are excited for the ways it will help us improve the ability to serve our residents.

I have been so impressed with the way our staff has managed the increased demands for new services that have been offered, such as passport processing here at City Hall. In the first year of taking on this project, over 1,400 passports were issued generating over \$45,000 without an increase in personnel. The opportunity for electronic payment of utilities continues to expand with almost 100,000 transactions handled this way, while at the same time this department managed over 30,000 phone calls dealing with utility questions.

Our Human Resource Department has the fewest employees, but accomplish so much. In addition to posting 33 new jobs and processing and responding to 470 applicants for employment, they cooperated with the Fire Department and created the Metro Fire Testing Consortium with seven other cities, helped with changes to several City policies, administered employee benefits and survived two inspections/audits.

Our entire City is so fortunate to have a department that keeps our City on sound financial footings. Under the leadership of our finance director, we were able to retire two bonds early, saving the City over \$630,000 in interest payments. The ability to accomplish this came from careful planning and has resulted in the City receiving a AAA Bond rating. Only six entities in the entire State enjoy this high of a bond rating. They include the State of Utah, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Davis and Weber Counties, and the city of Murray.

This year I have instituted a Public Safety meeting where I am able to meet with our police and fire chiefs and discuss incidents that have occurred in our City within the previous week, along with other items of common concern. This has helped me to learn a good deal more about these departments and what dedicated employees we have serving our community. Murray is so fortunate to have our own Police and Fire Departments. Earlier in the year, a change was made in the leadership of our Police Department, which I believe resulted in noticeable improvements in communication. They handled several high-profile cases last year with professionalism and resolve. The use of body cameras is headlining the news currently, but we have been using them along with dashboard cameras for quite some time. These tools helped in several cases last year. Another program our Police Department provides is the D.A.R.E. Program for all fifth-grade students in Murray schools. I have learned firsthand the value of this program as children learn about the effects of drug and alcohol abuse along with respect and appreciation for our police officers. Their graduation ceremonies are attended by many supportive family members along with our Police and School District leadership.

I have learned that in an emergency, there is no one I would rather rely on than the Murray City Fire Department. Their intensive training schedule resulted in over 9,600 hours of training conducted last year. They are prepared to handle many emergency situations including medical, hazardous materials, earthquakes, bombs, and, of course, fires. New state-of-the-art defibrillators were put into operation this year for cardiac emergencies.

Our City Attorney's Office is unmatched in its depth of talent and its ability to defend and protect the City's interests. Not only do they represent the City in all legal issues, their advice and guidance is required in many meetings that involve the City. The Criminal Division handled

more than 13,000 criminal cases which was an increase over the last two years and only 50 appeals went to the District Court. It was a banner year for small claims cases in the Court during 2014, going from about 600 in previous years to over 1200 in 2014. This put an increasing burden on the staff, but they have worked hard to keep the filing time and deposition time as minimal as possible. Online fines and payments are now made through the State, which has provided a \$16,000 savings.

Prior to being elected Mayor, I had the opportunity to participate on the Parks and Recreation Board. It was a great introduction to many of the programs and facilities our residents enjoy and appreciate. What I have learned in my new role is the depth of the work undertaken by our Public Services Department.

This Department takes care of most of the physical infrastructure in our City along with important programs including fleet maintenance, streets, water, waste water, trash collection, parks, recreation and cultural activities, cemetery, the Heritage Center, and the golf course. These varied divisions are managed by a wide group of exceptional employees.

It was not surprising to learn that pavilion rentals continue to be popular with over 1,050 requests being submitted in 2014. The park staff keeps them in excellent condition, even as we look to replace aging ones in Murray Park. Murray City recreation programs are in great demand, for example, we have over 1,000 adults who participate in the volleyball program here. The Park Center continues to be a popular facility for those wishing to work out or take classes. The staff is a creative group of well-trained individuals that offer new and fun activities, like the Movin' and Groovin' program, which had over 200 attendees. Swim lessons are the top recreation program in the City. In all the programs we offer, we had over 14,000 participants in 2014.

We are fortunate to have a very proactive Water Department who helped residents be motivated to change out their outdated plumbing fixtures through a rebate program. Almost 250 fixtures were updated this way. It coordinated well with the "Fix A Leak Week" as the Water Department partnered with Lowe's on offering discounts to repair plumbing leaks. Their efforts resulted in the department receiving national recognition from the A.W.W.A. and E.P.A. for this program.

Keeping up with necessary road repair is a constant effort. This year projects were completed on 5900 South, Avalon Drive, Capri and 1300 East, to name just a few. Street projects often include improvements for waste and storm water as well. We continue to focus on crack sealing, slurry sealing and overlays that preserve the life of the roads. Many projects need to be coordinated with U.D.O.T. and other groups. We are currently working with residents on improving opportunities for bike routes throughout the City.

Engineering is an integral part of the Community Development team in coordinating infrastructure on projects in the City. These groups work with developers to create projects that meet codes. Some of the projects that have been managed in 2014 include new homes at

the Cottages on Vine, Oxford Creek, Union Place along with Epic Gymnastics and Recovery Ways, both of which have built new facilities in the City.

Golfing at Murray Parkway is hard to beat, and with the warmer weather we have had for the past two years, it has become nearly a year-round activity. The staff has made great strides in improving the greens and trees on the course, however, the irrigation system needs to be replaced and funding is being set aside to accomplish that.

I am more convinced than ever that we have top notch arts and history opportunities here. Arts events are readily available, with something going on almost constantly. The Storytelling Festival is the newest art opportunity with 10 schools, the Heritage Center and professionals participating in this program. If you want to learn a great deal more about our amazing history, you can take a cemetery or museum tour. They are available for individuals, schools or other organizations.

For those who are 55 or older, there are many fun activities and new friends to be found at the Heritage Center. They have over 75 volunteers who donated over 6,500 hours of service in 2014. I was invited to be there this year as they received their National Senior Center Accreditation. They offer great meals and a chance to learn everything from pickleball to poetry.

The Murray Library is a great place to go if you want to learn anything. Over 400,000 visitors in 2014 can attest to that. The Library provided 654 programs to 24,000 participants – just imagine all the learning and fun that took place. Over 600,000 items were checked out, and hopefully over 600,000 items were returned, and 29,000 of them were eBooks. They are adapting to provide all types of media, including hosting a YouTube channel that had 170,000 views in 2014.

By having the opportunity to attend various meetings and conventions offered by several power company organizations, I have learned a good deal more than I ever knew about our power grid and all that it takes to keep the lights on. Murray Power is the only municipal power company in Salt Lake County. It is a complicated business to purchase and generate power at a reasonable rate for resell to our residents. We have excellent staff who understand this delicate balance and manage it well. The Power Department is also very busy with all the new businesses that need their service. They also work to maintain our existing infrastructure to keep it running at optimal levels. You will often see City arborists trimming trees around the City to keep lines clear. They coordinate Arbor Day each year and we have received the Tree City, USA distinction for 37 years in a row, longer than any other city in Utah.

For the first time, a magazine was published highlighting our City. Many of the departments contributed articles and pictures. It not only showcased our accomplishments and what the City has to offer, but presented a glimpse of our past. There were 25,000 copies printed and a copy was delivered to our residents, City hotels and City facilities.

So far in this report of the City, I have only referred to all the positive and wonderful aspects of this great community. However, it would only be fair and honest to include an area of disappointment and unfulfilled year-end goals that were not achieved on my part. When I came into office, one of my major objectives was to find a Murray solution to UTOPIA. This objective has consumed a considerable amount of time and effort by so many. I would like to acknowledge the courage and trust of our City Council, the brilliant problem solving ability of our Finance Director Justin Zollinger, and the collaborative effort by our Department Heads and Senior Staff that make up the Murray UTOPIA Committee. They have all contributed so much to this effort, and yet the objective, that was my responsibility to direct, was not fully achieved in 2014. Implementation of our Phase One, which we ultimately hope to become known as Murray Fiber, will be rolled out later this week. We are not discouraged, just delayed. The time devoted to study the proposal from a foreign company for takeover of UTOPIA was unexpected and time consuming, yet the right decision was made and the proposal was rejected. I have become much more educated and aware of the complexities of this issue and the entities involved. I know of no other program that has the long-term financial impact on our City than UTOPIA has. Because of that, it must be dealt with continuous, even renewed commitment, and with leadership that is both responsible and accountable. Our Murray plan is well thought out and it will ultimately lead us to honor our past. When the founding fathers of this great City set out to make us independent and self-reliant, they knew it would not be the easy course, but the right course. We should commit to do no less. With realistic optimism, I believe that in subsequent State of the City addresses the UTOPIA/Murray Fiber question will be in the positive column.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to the citizens of Murray. For their willingness to volunteer, their desire to serve each other and our community, and their commitment to keeping our City great. This, combined with the dedication and character of our 372 full-time, 5 part-time, and 473 seasonal employees, truly make Murray, A City Without Equal.

Thank you very much.